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Baker-Polito Administration Announces Acceleration Plan for MBTA Infrastructure Improvements

Includes immediate actions to increase proactive inspections and maintenance, accelerate schedules for critical capital projects, schedule weekend shutdowns to expedite work, advance legislative changes for innovative project delivery, and request budget support for additional staffing to support capital project delivery and augment inspections and maintenance

BOSTON – Today, Governor Charlie Baker announced a plan to accelerate the pace of MBTA capital construction projects with the goal of expediting the transformation of the MBTA into a modern, safe, reliable transit system. Through a five-part strategy, the acceleration plan builds on the T's existing robust safety program and aggressive Capital Investment Program and is designed to facilitate an increase in construction and maintenance projects within shorter timeframes.

The MBTA is in the midst of executing a five-year, \$8 billion Capital Investment Program that prioritizes core system investments into areas including new vehicles, track, signals, power systems, and maintenance facilities.

The MBTA is expanding its focus to include ways to increase the pace of all investments, and ensure system reliability by increasing maintenance and inspection intervals that properly reflect the age and condition of many MBTA assets. Additionally, the MBTA has worked to identify and resolve barriers that prevent increasing investment efforts.

This proposal includes five key initiatives:

1. Explore scheduling more aggressive **evening and weekend closures** to expedite infrastructure improvements.

2. Increasing the frequency of **proactive inspections and preventive maintenance** to find and fix potential issues before they impact service.
3. Seek changes to law that remove impediments to **force multipliers** for capital investment, such as flexible procurement and project delivery approaches.
4. **Negotiating with industry** partners to expedite manufacturing, accelerate contract milestones, and compress project schedules.
5. **Creating a new, flexible team** of additional MBTA personnel and contracted resources to focus on expediting construction and infrastructure projects. This team will consist of flaggers, motorpersons, bus operators, engineers, and track, signals, and power personnel. The team will have the flexibility to work on both operating and capital projects, which would not currently be possible if funded in the capital budget. This will require a one-time infusion of \$50 million in operating budget funds for the additional MBTA employees and outside experts to support capital project delivery, proactive inspections, and enhanced maintenance.

“The MBTA has made tremendous gains since the winter of 2015 to control its operating costs, strengthen the pipeline to design and build capital projects, and take steps to improve service by focusing investments on core system infrastructure,” **said Governor Charlie Baker**. “In order to capitalize on that progress, this acceleration plan will allow the T to continue its investments at a faster pace, with greater focus on service improvements to provide a safe, reliable means of transportation that supports our economy, and gets people where they need to go.”

“This acceleration plan will help support and complement the \$8 billion investment the MBTA will make over five years and the important work of the newly formed FMCB Safety Panel,” **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito**. “We greatly appreciate the patience of the MBTA’s riders and commuters as the plan is implemented and thank the MBTA personnel that continue to work around the clock on repair and recovery efforts.”

“Given the current landscape of MBTA repairs, we are confident these five initiatives will sharpen the MBTA’s focus on delivering construction projects and service improvements for riders,” **said MassDOT Secretary Stephanie Pollack**. “While we understand executing on this plan will likely cause additional inconveniences for our customers now, these measures will allow us to get to the MBTA that they deserve sooner.”

“This acceleration plan will give us tools we need to be more aggressive in our capital investments, but more important, it allows us to treat this situation with the urgency our customers demand,” **said MBTA General Manager Steve Poftak**. “While we acknowledge we can’t rebuild the system overnight, we can enhance our processes for inspections to ensure the MBTA remains safe for use while we execute on our capital program.”

Further details on the acceleration plan include:

- **Explore more aggressive evening and weekend closures to expedite infrastructure improvements.**
 - Following a long-standing practice, the MBTA traditionally saved critical capital work for the hours overnight when the T was not in service. While this reduced the impacts on MBTA

customers, the window within which work could take place limited progress and often prevented multiple activities from occurring simultaneously;

- Expanding work windows – through a combination of shutting down service earlier in the evening and for consecutive days – will allow the T to increase its concentration of effort during a planned disruption in service, resulting in enhanced progress, and improved coordination with other related construction activities;
- Furthermore, maximizing the work that can be done during these shutdowns by combining multiple projects in the same area makes each disruption more productive. For example, during the recent shutdown of the Green Line D Branch, capital construction contractors and MBTA maintenance forces were able to work on three projects concurrently (Green Line Track and Signals Upgrades, Fenway Portal Resiliency Improvements, and Green Line Grade Crossing Replacement);
- The MBTA is actively exploring opportunities to maximize use of planned weekend and evening shutdowns to accelerate maintenance work and infrastructure improvements. This may lead to increases in the number or length of shutdowns this summer and through the end of the year.
- Upcoming diversions include:
 - *Green Line D Branch (select weekends between August and September)*: for track renewal and signal upgrades;
 - *Green Line C Branch (weekends between June and August)*: for maintenance crews, and construction contractors to work on roadway grade crossings, tracks and switches;
 - *Orange Line (weeknights ongoing through August)*: for capital maintenance and track renewal between Wellington and Oak Grove by contractors and MBTA forces;
 - *Rockport Commuter Rail Line (bridge closure through June)*: to facilitate replacement of the Gloucester Drawbridge;
 - *Green Line D Branch (weeknights through December)*: for track renewal and signal upgrades;
 - *Orange Line (weekends during August and September)*: for capital maintenance and track renewal along the Southwest Corridor of the Orange Line;
 - *Fitchburg and Lowell Commuter Rail Lines (weekends through September)*: in support of the Green Line Extension project;
 - *Needham Commuter Rail Line (weekends during August and September)*: to support the Positive Train Control project.
- Additionally, the T will begin to map out an even more aggressive schedule of shutdowns for the 2020 construction season by building expanded evening and weekend work windows into upcoming contracts.
- Increasing the frequency of **proactive inspections** and preventive maintenance to find and fix potential issues before they impact service.
 - The MBTA currently conducts daily, weekly, monthly, and annual preventive maintenance inspections for vehicles, track, signals, power, and other infrastructure. These inspections meet or exceed all federal and state requirements and are critical elements of the T's robust safety program;

- The \$50 million requested by Governor Baker would provide additional support of inspection and maintenance crews to increase the frequency of inspections, focusing on the oldest parts of the system to identify and address issues before they cause disruption;
 - The MBTA will increase the resources available for a suite of specialized mechanized inspections using ultrasonic, geometric, and optical technology that can detect infrastructure defects, which cannot be seen by the human eye. For example, the MBTA will increase the frequency of ultrasonic inspections of rails and axles.
- Seeking changes to law that remove impediments to **force multipliers** for infrastructure improvements, such as flexible procurement and project delivery approaches.
 - The 2019 Transportation Bond Bill will include a suite of proposals to expedite capital projects and allow the T to leverage innovative financing and project delivery approaches.
 - Proposals include:
 - Allowing the MBTA to utilize an alternative project delivery method (Design/Build/Finance/Operate/Maintain) which involves a public entity contracting with a private entity for all aspects of a capital project;
 - Allowing the design/build project delivery method to be used on all construction and repair projects (not just those with budgets over \$5 million);
 - Allowing the MBTA to use “A+B bidding”, a procurement method that considers both cost and schedule in contract bids, driving more schedule competition among bidders
 - Authorizing job order contracting for capital projects under a \$500,000 threshold. This allows an on-call contractor to cost-effectively and efficiently address multiple, repetitive type projects such as repairs and maintenance of stations, platforms, and facilities.
 - **Negotiating with industry** partners to expedite manufacturing, accelerate contract milestones, and compress project schedules.
 - Given the scope and urgency of the current Capital Program, the MBTA will be reaching out to the contractor community to identify opportunities to expedite supply chain constraints and compress schedules;
 - Without compromising the T’s commitment to fiscal discipline and financial stewardship, this effort will focus on ways in which work can be re-sequenced, where gains can be made by altering work hours, and how financial incentives can play a role in achieving contract milestones earlier;
 - For example, MassDOT uses an incentive and disincentive contract tool to shorten construction periods, thereby reducing the length construction impacts have on the traveling public. A recent example was the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge Replacement Project in Boston during which the bridge deck was demolished and replaced in a few weeks, during the summers of 2017 and 2018.
 - **Create a new flexible team of additional MBTA resources and outside experts to support inspections, maintenance, and capital projects.**
 - This team will have the flexibility to work on both capital and operating projects in order to accelerate construction and maintenance projects. It will be funded by an immediate deficiency budget request of \$50 million for additional MBTA employees and third party

contractors and engineering consultants to support capital project delivery and augment existing inspection and maintenance activities.

- Categories include:
 - Additional flaggers, motorpersons, and related employees to provide safe access to tracks so more construction and maintenance can occur during service and non-service hours;
 - Additional bus operators and related employees to provide alternative service during system shutdowns;
 - Additional inspection and maintenance crews for power, signals, and track infrastructure to proactively identify and address abnormal conditions before they impact service;
 - Rehired annuitants to bring their experience and expertise back to the MBTA during this period of accelerated investment;
 - Funds for expert consultants to train and mentor MBTA staff to develop and implement data-driven strategies and best practices for inspections and maintenance.

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